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Remarks on the columnies
published in The Quarterly
Review on the English ship-
builders.





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REMARKS

ON

The Calumnies

PUBLISHED IN

THE QUARTERLY REVIEW,

ON

THE ENGLISH SHIP-BUILDERS.



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REMARKS

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The Calumnies

PUBLISHED IN

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THE ENGLISH SHIP-BUILDERS.

IN every public contest, the desire of gaining the benefit of general opinion occasions some appeals through the medium of the press. These appeals are of course to be viewed as the pleadings of the parties before the grand tribunal of the British Nation, and can obtain attention only in proportion as their reasoning is conformable to experience and common sense, and their statements are supported by proof or by facts admitted or indisputable. While the contending parties stand on equal ground, neither has a right to complain; but in modern times, there is an intermediate tribunal, which, under the pretext of pronouncing judgment in matters of literature, dogmatizes in religion, politics, and on every subject connected with the public and with individuals. The conductors of these publications, assuming the character of judges, play the part of advocates, and very often the very parties interested in the disputed matter prefer their own memorials in the shape of criticisms on the statements of their adversaries: thus appearing to decide, while they are, in fact, not advancing the determinations

of a candid judgment, but venting the suggestions of malice or of interest.

The Ship-builders of England are intitled to complain of the use which has been made against them of this engine of pretended judgment, converted as it has been into the means of disseminating calumny, and infusing into the public mind errors of the most dangerous description, for the purpose of forwarding a plan of the most ruinous tendency.

The Ship-builders who have establishments within the Port of London and at the Outports*, with regret, but with confidence, have been obliged to submit to the legislature, and now submit to the public, a short view of the grievances under which they labour in consequence of a modern construction of the law relating to shipping, and their apprehensions for themselves and the nation at large should the system so inauspiciously begun be continued and extended.

The subject of their complaint is the modern practice of admitting India-built ships to all the rights of registry, and all the privileges of British bottoms.

It must be a matter of regret that a system of maritime law, established by the wisdom of our ancestors, and by means of which the commercial prosperity and naval pre-eminence of the British Nation have progressively advanced, with inconceivable rapidity, to an unrivalled extent, should now be treated as a mere untried problem in politics, at the best; or by some, as a pernicious delusion, which, far from causing, has rather retarded, the attainment of national greatness. It must be an object of still more painful regret to those who are

* See the votes in 1812, 1813, and 1814.

obliged to present themselves as suitors before the great public tribunal, to feel that they are reduced to the necessity of pleading for the preservation of establishments upon which immense capitals have been expended, and which, protected by a benevolent and fostering system of law, have grown into an unexampled state of national utility and importance. Yet the Ship-builders feel confident that their application will not be vain, and that from the justice and wisdom of the legislature they shall receive that attention and relief which their case so forcibly requires.

Indeed the present mode of appeal would hardly have been necessary, had not great efforts been used, and particularly in the publication above noticed, to excite prejudice, by representing the Ship-builders of London as clamorous, unreasonable, interested individuals, jealous of the prosperity of other bodies, and unfortunately possessed of too much influence, which they used to the perversion of justice. They acknowledge themselves to be interested—deeply interested; for not only their own large capitals, but the welfare, almost the existence, of some thousands of families, and many thousands of individuals, depends on their being able to resist with effect the growth of a system which menaces them with ruin. An appeal of this nature, on the mere score of private interest, has never yet been treated with disregard; but in the present instance, individual grievance is not the prominent part of the case, the injury to the public spreads more wide and strikes more deep. If these parties have any portion of the influence which is invidiously attri-

buted to them, it arises not from their own wealth, importance, or activity; but from that feeling which truth and justice enable them to impart to the candid, patriotic, and disinterested; that their cause is not narrow, individual, or personal, but expansive, grand, and national.

It may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that the commercial prosperity of this country has been essentially promoted by the skill and ingenuity which have been exerted by those individuals, who have progressively formed extensive establishments for supplying merchant adventurers with the means of carrying their enterprizing speculations to the remotest parts of the ocean.

The certainty of easily procuring a fit ship, of any description and magnitude, and in any definite period, has removed one of the greatest difficulties under which our ancestors laboured; for they, when it was requisite for any commercial pursuit of consequence, and sometimes even for the purposes of war, were obliged to have recourse to foreigners, for the hire of their very inferior ships, when compared with those of our own country at present; and it is not difficult to conceive what would now have been the state of our shipping, if that system had been invariably pursued.

Fortunately, however, for us, the occasional suspension of intercourse, to which hostilities have given rise, has rendered it indispensably necessary TO ENCOURAGE ship-building AT HOME; and, until lately, it has kept equal pace with the progress of the country to its present state of pre-eminence in the scale of nations.

It is true that our commerce, at this day, might be carried on for some time in foreign ships, were British ships and British ship-building establishments annihilated. Tonnage might be procured in ships of every description, from foreigners, either on hire or by purchase; but what the effect would be, in a few years, may easily be conjectured, though much too painful to contemplate.

The advantages which this country has derived since the Revolution, from building ships of war in private yards, are too numerous for description; but the most essential benefit that system has produced, is our present maritime ascendancy, which would not have been attained, but for the efforts made in the private establishments during the American war, when they were invited, in the most pressing manner, to relinquish a part of their private business, and to build for the public service; and, at that time, it was only necessary for a builder to intimate that he was disposed to undertake work, and he was immediately employed. If this measure had not been resorted to, the greatest efforts which the king's yards could possibly have made, would have been totally inadequate to withstand the gigantic exertions of our enemies to overwhelm us by a superior navy.

For the purposes of duly appreciating the value of the private ship-building establishments, in a national point of view, it is only necessary to recur to the state of the country, and to the feeling of the public mind, on great and pressing emergencies; for instance, when Admiral Byng was sent against the French, at Toulon, with a fleet in so bad a

condition as almost to justify the event which followed. When the combined fleets of France and Spain were cruising in the British channel, and menacing Plymouth unopposed, and it was deemed necessary to give the English Admiral orders not to risk a general engagement. When Lord Cornwallis was blocked up in the Chesapeake, and in consequence of not being relieved, was compelled to surrender his army to a superior force. When the fall of all the West India Islands would have been inevitable, had not the junction of the French and Spanish fleets been prevented by the gallant conduct of Lord Rodney and his bold associates. When Gibraltar was left to its fate, the siege being covered by fifty ships of the line, until Lord Howe, by a desperate effort, and at incalculable risk, almost miraculously succeeded in relieving it. Or if the mutineers at the Nore had succeeded in gaining over the whole fleet, and an entire revolt was then not thought improbable, would the king's yards alone have been sufficient to supply a navy, in time to meet our enemies? Or when the gallant and ever-to-be-lamented Nelson fought his last and glorious battle, an action to which the exertion of the private builders mainly contributed, by repairing in a very short time in the spring of 1805, ten sail of sixty-four gun ships, two or three of which were in that action, and the others sent to the North-seas, to relieve as many seventy-fours on that station, which had joined Lord Nelson's fleet, without which prompt and timely aid, it is generally understood,

his Lordship would have been unable to achieve that great and memorable victory*?

When, recently, the whole country was alarmed at the threatened invasion, to quiet the public mind it was necessary that a fleet should speedily be afloat, equivalent in force, and of a class adapted, to meet the enemy; the private yards were employed, and in a few weeks, as if by magic, a very numerous and powerful armament was created, and although it was not brought into action, in immediately repelling invaders, it was found very useful in annoying the enemy's small vessels, and completely interrupting all his coasting intercourse.

The public naval arsenals have frequently been in danger of being destroyed by incendiaries, and it lately occurred to some reflecting person (who for communicating the thought merits the thanks of his country) that it might enter into the contemplation of some inveterate foe, to give a fatal blow to the commercial prosperity of England, by distributing a number of small foreign vessels, under neutral flags, in different parts of the Thames, and using them as fire-ships at a concerted moment. Whether the idea had ever entered the mind of

* It may be here observed, in reply to an observation in a pamphlet recently published, wherein it is roundly stated that the *average duration* of British-built ships is only "eight years," that several of the *sixty-four gun ships* above alluded to were at *that time* from seventeen to twenty years old, and that some of them were *then* repaired for the *first time*, and with *fir*, and are now and have been actually in service since that period; and what may be more astonishing to the author of the tract referred to—that most of those ships were built *in the private yards*!

any of our enemies is not publicly known, but its execution is now rendered impossible, by a very judicious regulation, which compels all neutrals, of doubtful character, to consort together.

It is in times of great alarm, and under circumstances of emergency, that the importance of these establishments is to be estimated, which from their extent and preparation are constantly in a state to render immediate succour, and not in times like the present, when every unreflecting person sleeps at ease, satisfied that no mutinous spirit exists in our navy, that the whole coast of France is completely blockaded, and our fleets range the Seas invincible.

A very few years ago these propositions were so universally conceded, and the importance of the British Ship-builders as a body so well understood, that any statement on the subject would have been deemed absolutely superfluous, or perhaps ridiculed as the mere offspring of vanity and egotism: yet such is the change which has been effected within these few years, that speakers and writers are now to be found who question their merits, ridicule their apprehensions, stigmatize their efforts as the result of interested combination and undue influence, and even treat the annihilation of their establishments as a matter hardly to be deprecated, or perhaps rather to be promoted. And these great exertions and unwarranted attacks are made in favour of a new and alien interest, an interest which when first it shewed itself was favoured by no party, but which, having gained at first a temporary sanction, is now seeking not only permanence, but

such advantages and encouragement as will finally drive the art of Ship-building, with all its auxiliary employments, from the banks of the Thames to the shores of India.

The first trace of this innovation is to be found in the proceedings of the East India Company in 1787. In that year, Mr. David Scott proposed to the directors to employ India-built ships, under an allegation that the British ships could not be supplied with freight outward. The proposal was rejected, as not less pernicious than the pretext by which it was supported was unfounded.

But, notwithstanding this repulse, the favourers of the new project knew too well the effects of perseverance to give up their pretensions and their hopes. The late Lord Melville, so long the oracle on India affairs, espoused their cause, and in the years 1792 and 1793, the rejected plan was again brought forward, recommended in terms of specious generality, as being calculated to increase the exports of British manufactures and produce, and to bring home the *fortunes of individuals*. At this time, perhaps, it had not been clearly apprehended by any but those who were most intimately in the secret, that the defined end of this project was to raise a rivalship in India, which should altogether prevent the exportation of all those numerous and important British manufactures which are used in the structure and equipment of ships, and that the fortunes of individuals were to be brought home, not in specie, bills, or such goods as would contribute to the revenue, and extend the scope of mercantile intercourse with foreign na-

tions, but in the shape of *ships ready-built and equipped*, to be admitted to registry, and all the advantages of British-built vessels, and thus to realize fortunes for the company's servants in Asia, by the destruction of valuable establishments, and the ruin of meritorious individuals at home.

Under the general impression above alluded to, a bill was prepared, "for allowing, *for a limited time*, the importation of goods from India and China, and other parts within the limits of the exclusive trade of the East India Company, in ships *not* of British built, nor registered as such; and for the exportation of goods from Great Britain by the same ships, under certain restrictions."

Justly alarmed at the probable effects of such an innovation, although its ultimate objects were still concealed, the Ship-builders in the Port of London applied to government for protection, and received from Mr. Pitt and Lord Melville (then Mr. Dundas) the most positive assurances that the measure should only be limited and temporary. And in fact the act which afterward passed, and is known as the 35 Geo. III. c. 115, is limited in duration to the then existing war, and eighteen months after its termination, and contains some, though slight, restrictions. Indeed, the Ship-builders could hardly contemplate the extension which has since been given to the plan of superseding their employment, when they found the minds of both the great statesmen they approached, impressed with the principle which Lord Melville afterward expressed in writing to them, when he said, "THE LARGE SHIPS built for the service of the East India Company

have always appeared to me necessarily connected with THE PERMANENT INTERESTS of this country, in so far as they afford a steady and invariable employment to the ship-building interests of Great Britain, and, by that means, SECURE TO ITS NAVAL INTERESTS a ready supply of workmen and manufacturers of ship-building materials, when the *exigencies of the State may require it.*" His Lordship further said, that he gave it as his decided opinion, "That the *whole of the China trade, and the whole of the regular trade, of the East India Company, should, if possible, be carried on only in the ships of the description of those to whom he had just alluded.*"

The security in which these declarations were calculated to lull the Ship-builders was increased by the conduct of the East India Company, who, as a body, uniformly declared against the project for building ships in India for the purpose of registry in England. They employed much research, and by their committee drew up an able and luminous report* on the subject, in which, both by fact and argument, they disproved and refuted all the assertions and reasonings advanced in favour of the plan. They undertook this task in consequence of letters on the subject transmitted by Lord Melville; and this correspondence was so conducted, that no doubt was entertained by the Ship-builders that the statute of the 35th of the king would be permitted to expire at its appointed time, during the short peace of Amiens. To their great surprise, however, and without their having received the least intimation of the measure intended, an

* See Collection of these Reports published by J. M. Richardson, Cornhill, and Black and Co., Leadenhall-street, in octavo, 1809.

act received the royal assent on the 19th March 1802, into which had been introduced a clause for continuing the effect of the former statute, *during the whole term* of the company's charter.

The passing of this act (42 Geo. III. c. 20.) was the more surprising, as it was known that a committee of the directors of the East India Company were *at that time* employed in drawing up a report on the private trade and on Ship-building; and a report very shortly afterwards appeared, dated the 25th March 1802, containing the decided and well-reasoned objections of the company against the measure proposed. But it appears that while the body was thus earnest in exposing the evils to be apprehended, some of its members were not less eager to secure the individual profit which might be expected, and had made their private arrangements for carrying to its greatest extent, a trade which the directors at large, *with the entire approbation of the proprietors*, and general assent of the public, deprecated as highly prejudicial to the best interests of the country.

Under the sanctions thus obtained, and with the capital and encouragement thus supplied, the business of Ship-building in India has ever since proceeded. The general trade of the company is now rapidly centering itself in Indian-built bottoms; the royal navy has ships of the line and frigates supplied from the shores of Asia; the proprietors of these establishments, encouraged by success, do not scruple to unfold their plan of dealing in ships, ready-built and equipped, *as an article of commerce*, in which they can easily undersell the British ship-builder; and, to extinguish

at once every hope of advantage in the proprietors of British capital and the patrons of British industry, every article used in the equipment of these vessels, cordage, canvas, and iron, is to be *the produce and manufacture* of India. Copper is imported there from the south coast of America at much less cost than it can be purchased here.

The East India Company obtain from these Asiatic builders their largest ships for their regular and China trade. Men of war and frigates are built in their docks; and from the extension of their employ, it now results, that in all the yards within the Port of London, which have slips for constructing forty-one ships, *not a single ship is* * building; and in their docks, which have accommodation for the refitting of sixty-two ships, eighteen only are undergoing repairs, and those but slight.

Such is the dangerous nature of innovation; such are the effects of a plan first brought forward in the most modest terms of self-denial, and patronized by Lord Melville only with the reserve of a positive declaration, that "the large ships built for the East India Company are necessarily connected with the permanent interests of the country, as they afford a steady and invariable employment to the ship-building interests of Great Britain, and by that means secure to its naval interests a ready supply of workmen and manufacturers of ship-building materials, when the exigency of the State may require it."

While this portentous state of things has been advancing upon them, the Ship-builders and other

* March, 1814.

persons connected with the equipment of vessels have not omitted to express their apprehensions on the subject. Pens have been drawn and speeches made on the other side, in which their case has been variously treated; the persons interested assuming a different tone as their prosperity advanced, and their establishments promised to be permanent. At first, they kept in view the reserves which prevailed in the mind of Lord Melville, and treated their own manufacture as small and harmless, and the fears of the Ship-builders of England as vain and groundless; but the mask is now thrown off, and they do not conceal that their hopes extend almost altogether to the annihilation of the London establishments; or if, in mercy, their existence is permitted, it is to be only as the means of manufacturing smaller vessels, and repairing the India-built ships, if their aid for that purpose shall be wanted; but which, from experience since their introduction in 1794, is not to be relied on, as affording any relief to the shipwrights and other manufacturers here.

According to these persons, teak, the timber of which the Indian vessels are said to be made, grows in the British territories in Asia, and is, in all respects, preferable to oak; besides, the scarcity of oak timber in England does not allow of its extensive employ in Ship-building, and this scarcity neither can, nor ought to be remedied. They do not hesitate to maintain that the private yards in England have, by their building of ships, disgraced and injured the navy; and, far from agreeing with Lord Melville on the importance of keeping together the

artificers and manufacturers employed in the preparation of ships, they insist that there is no probability of their emigration, for that if not retained as shipwrights, they will find work as millwrights, wheelwrights, or house-carpenters, or obtain some other employ, so as to be easily supported, and their services will be obtained when wanted; though the emigration in 1802* must be in the recollection of every one acquainted with maritime affairs.

Some of these statements seem so wild and unfounded, that it would hardly be necessary to notice them, did it not appear, from the confidence with which they are advanced, that *a disposition exists somewhere* to press this measure to its utmost extent, without regarding too nearly the arguments by which it may be supported or opposed.

The great fact on which this whole project has been founded, is that of† inexhaustible forests of teak growing within the British dominions, fit for Ship-building, and being left to waste, while an alarming and increasing scarcity is felt at home. The desire to turn this distant treasure to advantage has dazzled the sight and perplexed the judgment of speculators to such a degree, as to make them pursue the acquisition, at first indifferent to, and at length triumphant in, the calamity to be brought on the proprietors of establishments

* See the letter addressed to the Admiralty in this year, on that subject.

† But see Col. Symes and others.

at home, and all who depend on them. Without inquiring too exactly, whether the ships manufactured in India are built all of teak, or whether the wood of which they are made does grow entirely within the British dominions; it would be well to consider, in a more extensive way, whether the building of British vessels of English timber is a measure of policy which ought so easily to be given up; and whether the growth of oak at home, and its importation in the manner hitherto used, ought not to be still strenuously promoted and encouraged by an adherence to old legislative provisions.

India is not yet properly to be considered as a British colony, but it is rapidly assuming that character. When peace shall have given leisure for the formation of new associations, when the want of immediate protection is not so strongly felt as at present, and when the power of the East India Company shall have received a few more assaults from enterprising individuals, or rival bodies, their territory will in no respect differ from that which is properly called a colony. The rational fears expressed by the directors, in their excellent Report of the 27th of January, 1801, will be rapidly realized, and after encouraging a manufacture and trade to the extent to which that in question will be carried, they will in vain exert their enfeebled energies in an endeavour to prevent those independent commercial enterprizes which will have the effect they so justly deprecate, of presenting the British character in a new and degrading light before the natives, introducing bands of needy, fallacious, and desperate adventurers, and weakening by means of

a separate British interest, the important and delicate cause of British ascendancy.

In commercial respects, it is difficult, even now, to distinguish the British dominions in India from a colony; the same general principles are applicable to each; the same course must be pursued, *the same errors must be avoided*, to give prosperity to both.

It is a truth little disputed, that colonies or alien establishments become burthensome, and cease to be useful, when their productions, natural or manufactured, *are the same* with those of the parent or governing State. India, at the first view, would seem as little likely as any spot on the face of the earth, to become in that way injurious to Great Britain. Yet, by the ingenuity of commercial cupidity, means *have been found* to render that country the rival of England in the building and equipment of ships, and in all the arts contributory thereto. The legislative vigilance, which prevents the importation of a silk or a muslin handkerchief, is lulled to sleep; and while a ready clamour would be raised at an attempt which might tend to injure the manufacturers of *Spital-fields*, or of *the linen districts*, the complaints of those who would preserve to the country one of ITS MOST VITAL ARTS are treated with scorn, as the outcry of half-a-dozen interested individuals. In all cases of grievance or hardship, the oppressed or interested parties must necessarily be the first to complain; but when their case is once fairly committed to public investigation, it becomes a public concern, it is to be judged by its importance and its truth, and not to

be prejudiced by an arrogant assumption of disinterestedness, unbecoming in any, but most unbecoming in those, who, heedless of the ruin to be brought on domestic establishments of acknowledged value and utility, patronize to the most dangerous extent an alarming innovation, set on foot with hardly a pretext of public good, by a very few interested individuals. If the personal interests engaged are to have any weight in the question, the proprietors of the yards on the Thames have no reason to shrink from a competition with Bowmanjee, or Nowrajee, or those for whose personal advantage this cause is so warmly taken up. In truth, it is degrading and unjust to consider it otherwise than as A GREAT NATIONAL QUESTION; if unworthy of regard on that score, personal considerations can lead only to wavering counsels and impolitic conclusions.

The question, however, is not, nor can a question of this nature be, confined to the sufferers in the metropolis. In the conflict of commercial enterprize, the evil inflicted on one party must be felt by all; and the injustice exercised toward the Ship-builders in the Port of London, must, in its effect, greatly injure those of other parts of the kingdom. The trade which they now enjoy without competition will be an object of desire to the London builders, and in the new division of an insufficient manufacture, some establishments will, with difficulty, be able to maintain themselves, and many must sink altogether.

Before the delusive plan of forming the English Navy, military and commercial, entirely of Indian timber is permitted to gain too firm hold on the

public mind, it may be well to consider its effect on the European commerce and connexions of Great Britain. If the dealing with the British North American colonies, which has of late employed so many British ships and British seamen, and with the northern nations for ship-timber, must be given up, the latter will of course be eagerly seized by the enemy; by that country, in particular, which, under every form of government, and in every possible form of administration, has been, and must continue to be, the rival, and, subject to a greater or less degree of rancour, the enemy of England. It may be said that the trade with the Baltic is a losing trade, the pecuniary balance being always against this country. In the counting-house, the argument would not be without weight; but in a political discussion it is light indeed. The warmth of regard felt toward the British nation by every class of men in Russia, Prussia, Sweden, and Denmark, a regard which has tempered the heat of misguided ministers, mitigated the hostilities arising from an ill-judged confidence in our implacable foe, and finally led to those arrangements and efforts to which Europe may ascribe her freedom and her happiness, has been maintained chiefly, if not solely, through the influence of the trade which it is now proposed to destroy. The supposed commercial loss on the part of England has operated as a perpetual imperceptible subsidy, purchasing, not the march of troops, or some temporary limited effort of government, but the powerful influence arising from the affection of the majority of the people, an influence founded not on the caprice or

the occasional views of any part of the nation, but on the ascertained interests and experienced good of all. Are we ready to forego this influence?—France will be alert in securing it. The politics of that country uniformly tend to the acquisition of ascendancy, wherever they can establish a connexion; and its rulers have shewn, on all occasions, that expence or apparent sacrifice were objects of small consideration, when opposed to the accomplishment of their favourite views.

The great arguments on which the supporters of the Indian-built vessels rely are, the excellence and plenty of the teak, and the scarcity and imperfect condition of the British Oak. Of teak, it is averred, “that its durability exceeds that of the best oak; it requires little seasoning, and never shrinks; it does not splinter when struck with shot; bears exposure to the heat of the torrid zone, and the cold of the frozen ocean, without injury; and is therefore, perhaps, the only timber in the world that can stand the changes of climate to which ships are subject, when employed on long and distant voyages. It is also said to be more peculiarly adapted for Ship-building from its quality of preserving iron, in consequence of its containing a considerable quantity of oil, and no ligneous acid.” All this may be true, or, at most, subject only to the deductions which prudence ever makes from the warm statement of a zealous advocate; but the value of the eulogy is much diminished by the admission made by the same advocate, that *Indian-built* and *teak* ships are not to be considered as synonymous terms. For Bombay, he claims the

praise of building none but the very best ships, and of the very best materials and workmanship ; but Bombay has no means of producing above two ships in a year. " On the river Hoogly," it seems, " building-yards have been constructed by individuals, where ships are built on contract for sale, and *teak of an inferior quality, and other kinds of timber*, less durable, are introduced.—These ships," the advocate proceeds, " *though excellent*, are, of course, not held in such estimation as the Bombay-built ships *."

Considering that all the topics which natural history and the history of shipping can supply, have been exhausted by the patrons of the new attempt, in discussions on the dry rot, and in exposing the clumsiness, ignorance, and inattention of the British Ship-builders, this statement is not a little astonishing. The necessity of felling oak at one season of the year only ; the inevitable destruction resulting from the use of any wood, but that which has been most carefully selected and adapted ; and the gross absurdity of constructing ships with different species of timber, have all been expatiated on, and the Ship-builders at home reproached for their ignorance or neglect in such important particulars. In the very paper from which the above observation is extracted, the English Ship-builders are described as a proud, wealthy, degenerate race, unacquainted

* See also Col. Symes' Embassy, vol. iii. p. 267, wherein he observes, " That a durable vessel of burthen can *not* be built in the river of Bengal, except by the aid of teak plank, which is procurable from *Pegue alone*." He likewise remarks, "that ships have been constructed of *Saul and of other indigenous timber* of Bengal ; but on trial they were *not* found to be *serviceable*!"

with the business in which they have employed their capital. Yet, although these errors and defects are so striking in England, an Indian speculator may establish yards whether he reside in or near them or not; he may build ships with inferior timber; with timber of different kinds, some more and some less durable; and he may employ workmen not capable of equalling those who can only do a quarter of the work performed by an English shipwright; and, after all, his ships shall, by this fair and candid instructor of the public, be pronounced *excellent*.

To give foundation to the claims of the Indian Ship-builders, it is assumed, that Great Britain does not produce a sufficient quantity of oak timber for the construction of shipping and the various other purposes about which it is employed. *This is a mischievous and a dangerous clamour.* Much assertion, much specious calculation, and much delusive argument are used to produce a desponding belief, that the crisis is fast approaching, that it is even arrived, when Great Britain must no longer look to HERSELF for the means of forming a navy; and the zeal of argumentation is even carried so far, as to assert, that individuals, in attempting to aid the public cause by planting oak, are acting foolishly, sacrificing the produce of their land, and seriously injuring their families. The assertions are as void of truth as the arguments are of judgment and sense. THE SCARCITY OF OAK TIMBER NEVER HAS EXISTED BUT IN SUPPOSITION; nor has government ever found delay or difficulty in the execution of any order, *however sudden or extensive*, through the want of oak. When the unskil-

ful parsimony of a short-sighted minister had left the public stores naked of those resources which were requisite for the formation of a navy, the Ship-builders of London took upon themselves the task of supplying the deficiency, and with a punctuality and dispatch beyond all precedent, furnished a great proportion of that navy*, which, during the present war, has constituted the glory and security of the Empire. That a sudden demand, joined to the other circumstances of the times, has raised the price of oak, is beyond all dispute, but never beyond the advance in price of other articles of the produce of the soil; but what commodity in extensive use is there, which has not experienced an equal or greater advance? A reference to the accounts of the Navy Board, and the Board of Ordnance, and to the testimony of their officers, and to some of the persons employed by the commissioners of the woods and forests, would shew that there neither is, nor is there reason to apprehend, a scarcity of oak timber in Great Britain. *A fair allowance for land-carriage* would always secure oak timber of the *largest* dimensions for the public service, if the public wants were prudently anticipated.

Indeed, on the face of the argument adduced on the other side, the supposition of a scarcity of Oak is absurd. The advocates for the Indian ships assert, that the demand for oak timber, exclusively of that employed in Ship-building, is great, and rapidly increasing; and that the price keeps pace

* See the account presented to the House of Commons, dated the 5th April, 1813.

with the demand. If that be so, it is repugnant to the first principles which regulate commercial opinion to suppose that the progressive augmentation of supply will not meet the advancing exigency. There is no instance in the history of industrious and intelligent people, where a liberal price and a brisk and regular demand have not produced a copious supply; production is only checked by prohibition, by undue interference, and by speculative importation, which relax hope, impede enterprise, and discourage perseverance. This appears to be one of the principal engines of the adversaries of the British Ship-builders, and it is employed even to the extent of calculating how much a man would lose in one hundred years, by planting an acre of land with oak, instead of letting it at one pound, and laying out each year's rent at compound interest. Such childish essays certainly never did, and it is hoped never can, turn the scale in a great national question.

But the British Ship-builders have, most of all things, reason to complain of a system of abuse and calumny levelled against them, and which aims not merely to decide the existing question to their disadvantage, but to make the public believe that their establishments are conducted on such principles that the property and lives embarked in ships constructed by them are through their ignorance, carelessness, and selfishness, hourly endangered, and often wantonly thrown away. To aid this impression, *in a late publication*, an enumeration is made of the Thames-built Indiamen which have foundered at sea during the present century. The number is twelve; the first ship mentioned

was nineteen years old when she went down, and of the circumstances attending the fate of the others not a syllable is mentioned ; but it is roundly asserted that such are the weak and defective ships constructed for commerce by the Thames-builders. The cause of truth could never have required the aid of such coarse and venomous calumny. If these ships were so weak and defective, how extraordinary is it, that at the very time when most of them were upon the water, and had been so some years, the letter of Lord Melville, and the resolutions of the East India Company, should both contain such positive expressions of approbation and sanction to the labours of these calumniated builders, as have already been cited, and appear more at large in those documents. It would certainly be more than extraordinary, it would be wonderful, that these wretched defects should escape the observation of the Company, whose views are directed by judgment, and quickened by interest ; and of Lord Melville, whose indefatigable zeal in every thing relating to India led him to collect every kind of information, examine every branch of every service, and labour to detect abuse and mismanagement in whatever department it existed.

The India Company *never underwrite*, and therefore their shipping surveyors are most particular in their attention to the *strength* of their ships, and even subject themselves to the scurrilous animadversions of interested persons, who hesitate not to say, that upon this point the surveyors exceed the limits of their duty : there are many causes

to which the dreadful calamity alluded to might with propriety be attributed, but the most probable conjecture is, that the ships were overtaken by a hurricane which sometimes occurs in the Indian seas, of such tremendous power, as to set the art and efforts of man at defiance. But coolly to attribute the melancholy loss of two thousand unhappy sufferers to the negligence of men, whose interest (leaving every other consideration out of the question) prompts them rather to exceed than fall short of giving the requisite strength and security to the ships in the Company's service, is such an instance of malevolence, as none but a demon is supposed to possess.

The enumeration above alluded to is made to introduce and grace the assertion, that "with one solitary exception, there is no instance on record of a Bombay-built teak merchant ship having foundered at sea." The assertion would be of more value, if the number of these inestimable ships in proportion to those built in Great Britain had been stated, together with their ages and circumstances. It does indeed appear, that between January 1794, and April 1813, seventy-six black ships of all sorts and sizes have been launched, of which forty-eight are taken, burnt, lost, worn out, or unaccounted for. How many of these were *Bombay-built teak* ships does not appear, but allowing them their fair proportion, and supposing the others to be *excellent* ships built of teak and other timber mixed; the result is not so very flattering to the Indian undertakers, as to warrant their advocates in reviling those whom they are seeking to ruin.

If the East India Company have a right to complain of the Thames-built ships, government, according to these advocates, have much stronger reasons to lament that the public service has been supplied from the private yards. From the industry and enterprise of the private Ship-builders, it is allowed that five hundred and seventy ships of the present navy have proceeded ; but still the friends of Indian Shipbuilding do not hesitate to wish, and to hope, that we shall never see again a single ship of the line set up on the stocks of a private yard, and few frigates. Indeed, if all that is alleged of the badness of timber, slovenliness of workmanship, fraud and ignorance displayed in these structures, is justly charged on the builders, it is wonderful that they should so long have been employed, or that the government which has permitted them to build five hundred and seventy of the ships for His Majesty's service should not have been impeached.

But to prove that the prejudice which has been excited either by ignorant or interested persons, or the adherents to the different parties which exist in the naval departments, against the private builders, is founded in a design to misrepresent, or in misconception of the nature of the agreements entered into with the Navy Board by the private builder, and of the general system of superintendence, by the officers of government during the performance of the work, as well as of the times allotted for seasoning the timber and plank, and the method which the contractor adopts for obtaining his timber, also the modes by which he

conducts his establishment, and completes his contract, it will only be necessary to state the nature of the engagement which the private builder enters into with government.

When the Navy Board deem it expedient to build by contract, tenders are advertised for, and a day and hour appointed for receiving them sealed. They contain the price at which the contractor will engage to build the ship, agreeably to a written form of contract, specifying dimensions and scantlings, and including very minutely every article and particular; also drawings of every part are exhibited, to which the contractor binds himself to conform, in the most literal manner, without the slightest deviation; and consequently he is not held in the least responsible for the failure of any part of the construction of the ship, whether it be a deficiency in strength, stability, burthen, or sailing, provided the materials be good and the workmanship properly performed.

To insure these points, *a resident overseer*, selected as an experienced shipwright from a government yard, is appointed to superintend the building of the ship, with power to reject any of the materials which appear to be defective, and to communicate weekly, to the Navy Board, the progress, and every circumstance worthy of their notice.

During the whole time the ship is building, the overseer is assisted by the carpenter, appointed by the Navy Board to sail in the ship.

The assistant surveyor of the navy twice a week inspects, very minutely, every part of the work in

its progress; and the principal surveyor, who is always an experienced shipwright, and at the head of his profession, visits the yard occasionally, generally monthly, sometimes oftener, and his decision, in case of difference of opinion, between the builder and overseer, as to the fitness of any materials or workmanship is final and binding.

In addition to this arrangement for superintendence, the private yards are always open to the public, and any one is at liberty to inspect the ship, *without being questioned as to the object of his visit*; so that even if the government officers were inclined to favour the contractor, by the concealment of any defect or blunder, it is totally out of their power to prevent its being known; and a public disclosure of their mismanagement would subject them to the censure of their superiors, and perhaps the loss of their employments.

The intercourse and interchange of workmen between the king's and the large private yards is so frequent, that the work in both establishments may be fairly said to be performed by one set of artificers.

In the private yards, the restraints as to times and hours of attendance are not so rigid as in the king's yards, yet the work in the private yards, on the banks of the Thames, is required to be, and generally is, equal to the work done in His Majesty's yards; although, perhaps, in many things which do not eventually form a part of the ship, but are rather the implements for carrying on the work, that neat, and of course expensive, method, which serves merely to please the eye, is not pursued.

It is notorious, that some commanders, and even admirals, have an unfavourable opinion of ships built in the private yards; yet there is not one of them, who, if he were put on board a new seventy-four gun ship built in the river Thames, could determine, or would even venture to give an opinion, whether it was built in the king's or in a private yard. By the workmanship, it could not be discovered, and only perhaps by the materials, from a practice in the king's yards of permitting defective planks to be wrought in the upper works, and of having those defects amended, by large unsightly pieces, of which practice the contractor is not allowed to avail himself, and therefore, it follows, that it is rather by the defects, than the superiority, that king's built ships may be distinguished.

The timber used by the private builders is allowed by all persons, conversant with business, to be superior to that used in the king's yards, as it is bought *to suit the purpose* more exactly than it can be by government. By them, defective overgrown timber is received from the Royal Forests, as well as from the contracting timber merchants, which would ruin the private builder to receive into his yard; and the time allotted for seasoning the ship, whilst building, is stated in the contract to be *as long as the Navy Board may require*: so that were the premature decay, which some private built ships, in common with those built in the king's yards, have sometimes fallen into, dependant upon what is called seasoning, which absolutely it is not, yet the private builder

is not answerable for it. There is not any timber, however seasoned, but will afford sustenance to the fungus which is generated in what is called mildew, in damp places, whether it be in a cellar or in a ship; and such is the destructive property of this fungus, that the timber upon which it is permitted to vegetate, is decomposed in a few months; which timber, had it not been subject to the insidious attacks of such a devouring harpy, would probably have endured several centuries.

With consistent illiberality, the calumniators of the British Ship-builders impute to them the existence of the dry rot in the Royal Navy. One of them says, "By way of drying the dripping-wet timbers, stoves with charcoal are placed in various parts of the ship. The pent-up heat acting upon the moisture, soon brings forth plentiful crops of mushrooms; *hence the origin of the new and fashionable disorder named the dry-rot, unknown in former days in ships of war*, but which has produced, in our times, as many doctors and remedies as the fanciful diseases of the human body."

If all this evil has accrued to the navy in recent times, through the misconduct of the private builders, what censure ought not the public to bestow on those superintendants who have so ill deserved the pay they have received, as to sanction such abuses; or if they have complained of them, what opinion can be formed of the Boards to which they have complained without effect? But whatever may be said of *fanciful* diseases, he must be a very fanciful writer who treats

the dry-rot in timber as a modern malady. The distinction between the dry-rot and the common-rot may have been, within this half century, more accurately ascertained than it was before, but the decay of ships through the premature unsoundness of the timbers, the need of repair soon after launching, and the extent and price of those repairs, have been the subjects of serious declamation and acrimonious satire long before the private yards produced many ships for the public service, and in times *when government was obliged to repel* the very same charges which are now so unjustly brought forward to ruin individuals.

It is said by the writer from whom the last extract was made, that “during the administration of the naval department, under Lord Sandwich, than whom one of more ability or energy has not presided either before or since, almost all the modern inventions of boiling, stoving, stewing, and charring, pickling with salt, impregnating with oil, burying in sand, in lime, &c. were submitted to the test of experiment.”

Lord Sandwich well deserves the eulogy which is here bestowed on him, and the frequent repetition of it is but a slight compensation for the barbarous obloquy with which he was so often assailed by the patriots of his own day, and the ready echos of all their malevolence. He was three times at the head of the naval department: first, from 1748 to 1751, after having been for four preceding years a junior Lord of the Admiralty; second, from April to September 1763; and last, from 1771 to 1782. If it was during the last of

these administrations that the experiments in question were made, they must have taken place between thirty and forty years ago, at a time when the private yards were not so extensively as of late employed in building for government; the disease which was to be cured and prevented by so many expedients could not, even then, have been quite "modern," and the knowledge of its existence and effects, and the earnest desire for its eradication, were implanted in a mind strong and vigorous by nature and enlightened by official experience of thirty years' standing. Have not the ship-builders much right to complain when attempts are made to excite prejudice against them, by charges so unfounded and statements so incongruous?

It is supposed that the decay of ships would be prevented by the exclusive use of winter-felled timber. The felling in the Royal forests can, of course, be regulated by those who have the superintendence of those domains; with respect to oak that is private property, if the superior excellence of timber so felled can be demonstrated, there is no doubt but that means may be found to secure a supply of it by contract. The necessity (if it be possible) of taking the bark while the tree is standing, and the disadvantage of employing the woodman only in the shortest days, must inevitably enhance the price; but if the safety and durability of ships can be attained, the expence would never be considered; indeed it would return with interest. The instances at present cited do not prove much. Of the Royal

William, a miracle of soundness, little is known *: the Montague, built in 1779, of winter-felled oak, has answered its purposes most satisfactorily ; but another ship, which was built, half of this timber, and half of that which was cut at other seasons, was broken up, after a certain term of service, and *both her parts* had equally yielded to decay.

Much has been stated in favour of the cheapness with which the public are supplied with ships built in the King's yards, and the difference is said to be as 28*l.* is to 33*l.* 10*s.* per ton, making an excess of 5*l.* 10*s.* per ton, or about 8000*l.* on the tonnage of a seventy-four. The estimate, upon which this assertion is founded, is drawn from the contract prices of the materials served into the King's yards, and from the prices, which are allowed by the Navy Board, for labour only for the respective parts of the ship, without including the immense expence of forming and maintaining the King's yards, the salaries of officers, expences of purveying and converting timber, and for carrying on the works of the ship, keeping the accounts, or for wear and tear of slips, wharfs, and warehouses, or the expence of horses and their attendants, which of course must be included in the price allowed to the private builder, besides an adequate profit, on a work of such magnitude, and involving so much responsibility, as necessarily attaches

* The Royal William was planked under water with beech, which, if used before it becomes doted, answers the purpose quite as well as English oak, and so will elm or foreign oak: attention to this circumstance alone would occasion a very material saving of native oak.

to the building of a seventy-four gun ship. And further, the estimate is founded upon the net quantities of materials required, without reference to the cost of those articles, which in making so large a selection as a seventy-four requires prove unfit and useless; or to the waste of cordage, staging, and utensils, which are consumed in the progress of the building, but which do not form a part of the ship. Nor is there in this estimate any allowance for the plunder which takes place in every dock-yard in the kingdom, and which produces such numerous and expensive prosecutions. If these circumstances were taken into consideration, and included in the estimate, with a due allowance made for conducting public concerns, we might fairly make the assertion, that the public obtains three seventy-four gun ships from the private builders, for the same sum which two cost in the king's yard.

The East India Company having been established in London, their shipping has always been supplied by the Builders upon the banks of the Thames, except in one or two instances, in the commencement of the trade, when the company found it expedient to resort to Ireland, for two or three ships (which were not approved of), to quiet the alarm which arose in the public mind, from a prevalent opinion that the ships which the company built were destructive of naval timber*.

* "In 1640 the East India Company were offered a ship upon freight at 25*l.* per ton, and as it appeared by a calculation that their own shipping stood them in 31*l.* per ton, she was chartered, and performed the voyage in eleven months, being the shortest that at that period had ever been known.—As this

To such an extent did this prejudice reach, that in a pamphlet of the day, in the year 1616, it was asserted, that a circuit of fifty miles round London, would not produce enough timber to build such another ship as the "Trade's Increase," which was about eleven hundred tons, and was lost on the first voyage. If there was the least foundation for such an assertion, what a difference in the state of timber at that time, and the present : since many parks in the vicinity of the metropolis contain, singly, a quantity sufficient for such a ship. The dread of scarcity has probably promoted the growth of oak, and the same principle will continue to operate, to an extent scarcely to be imagined.

Timber has recently borne so fair a price, that every landlord has become particularly careful to have the hedge-rows preserved, and this source alone will abundantly supply the current demands of commerce; and those reasoners can hardly be deemed friendly to government, who labour to excite and confirm apprehensions of scarcity when they have tens of thousands of acres of woodlands that only require protection. The substitution of cast iron instead of oak, in steam-

proved an advantageous concern to the owners, others were led by degrees to follow their example : so that the Company's trade for a time was carried on partly by their own, and partly by hired shipping. The *country* at length being furnished with such a *stock of shipping*, that the Company could rely upon being supplied with tonnage sufficient for their annual wants, by the hire of ships upon freight, they *relinquished* the practice of building their own ships, and sold their dock-yards; since which time, with but few exceptions, the East India Company's capital has ceased to be invested in shipping."

engines, mills, bridges, &c. &c. materially lessens the consumption of large timber.

The ship-building establishments on the Thames having had their origin about the time of the commencement of the East India company, have kept pace with the growing prosperity of the country, and having been accustomed to build large merchant ships, they have been constantly employed by government, during war, to build line of battle ships.

This regular succession of employment, in peace and war, has, at length, created a body of efficient artificers, equal to any demand or emergency ; but should the system be pursued, of resorting to other countries for a supply of merchant ships, it will shut up the source of employment in peace : and as the public yards cannot maintain their full establishment in peace, when that event occurs, the workmen destitute of employment will have no other alternative but dispersion or emigration. Also, as it will not be possible to rear young men in time of peace, in the private yards, without having ships to build, the State may be driven to the necessity of depending *upon Asia* for a supply of *shipwrights*, as well as *ships*, the former of which would make a deplorable figure on the lakes of North America, whither it has recently been deemed expedient that a number of fine young men should be *hastily* conveyed, as the immediate safety of our dominions in that quarter depended upon prompt relief. Now, if it were not certain that the places of these young men could be immediately supplied, by entries of shipwrights from the private yards, this measure might have occasioned some hesitation

on the part of government, and in case the legislature should not deem it necessary to interfere in behalf of the Home Interests, the private building establishments will be so much reduced, that this resource will fail to government, in future.

The extent and importance of the establishments proposed to be sacrificed are perhaps but little known. Those on the banks of the Thames consist of extensive waterside premises, expensive to make, and burthensome to uphold in repair, the cost of a common single dry dock being about fifteen thousand pounds, and that of a slip about three thousand pounds, the mold loft, sawpits, and other buildings, from ten to twenty thousand pounds, in proportion to the magnitude of the concern.

Four or five officers are constantly employed, besides watchmen, warders, and labourers, amounting to about ten men, besides from forty to fifty apprentices: this forms the establishment, and must be maintained at the builder's expence at all times; but when the yard has an average proportion of work, the number of men employed, including artificers and labourers, is upwards of two hundred, and in many cases five or six hundred, in proportion to the emergency. The apprentices are allowed by the builder to be taken into the yard to assist the widows and indigent workmen who have boys upon their hands and have no other means of maintaining them; these lads are paid in proportion to what they earn, and thus having a constant stimulus to industry and exertion soon form a very efficient class of useful intelligent men, who in cases of great difficulty, and extreme danger, are more to be relied on for acting in concert (when the will goes

with the deed) than any other set of men who can be procured. The constant habit they are in of working and carrying together, and assisting each other, and the nature of their employment, render them both strong and active, and it not being the practice, as it is in the King's yards, to use horses, the whole of the component parts of the ship is carried on the shoulders of the men; and were it not for that determined spirit (which nothing but long habit can give) of standing up under the greatest pressure, as long as bones and sinews obey the will, the accidents would be tenfold what they now are; and to those who are unacquainted with the method of doing the work of Ship-building in a merchant's yard, the fatigue which a shipwright frequently undergoes would appear incredible.

Some persons have no notion of appreciating the different degrees of labour, and a stay-maker or a taylor, a plaisterer or a paper-hanger, is rated in the scale as high as a shipwright, and deemed worthy of as much daily wages, without considering that from the nature of the employment of a shipwright, it is only in the prime of life that he can hope to make much of his skill and strength; and yet each individual of the above classes earns more per day than a shipwright, and by working under cover is not subject to the vicissitudes of weather, and having a steady engagement is not liable to twenty weeks cessation of employment, which has lately been and is now the case with the merchant shipwright, whose only resource is going to sea; and thereby subjecting himself all the rest of his life to be impressed as a sea-faring man! His case is indeed a most deplorable one: having

arrived at the termination of a war in which his exertions have been conspicuously useful, for by our naval superiority, numerically as well as heroically, the enemy has long since been beaten off the ocean; yet, as a reward, the shipwright is now thought to be no longer useful, and is to be cast off an exile and a beggar!

The apprehensions entertained for these great establishments and their numerous hands, are treated, by the Naval Philosophers of THE NEW SCHOOL, as mere idle chimeras, calculated to alarm the weak, but not to convince the wise. If the pressure of business during war has called from their usual employments millwrights, wheelwrights, house carpenters, joiners, all who could handle an axe, an adze, or an augre, they, it is supposed, may, when no longer wanted, fall back into their old ranks, if they find that others have fixed themselves in their places: the projector presents no remedy or alternative. The Ship-builders, if their capital is unemployed, may seek to gain business, it is said, by doing a great portion of work at a low price. The artizan, it is affirmed, cannot migrate: America has more shipwrights than can find employment; and France more ships than she can man.

Were not these things seriously set down, it would be difficult to believe that they had entered into the human mind as reasons on a grave and important subject. If America is really so indifferent about seducing English subjects into the snare of citizenship, much injustice is done to her by those who have animated Great Britain to the present just and truly national war. If France has no need of

shipwrights, she has been long and grossly calumniated by those who have affirmed that her present navy, such as it is, has been produced by the enforced service of all who could, and many who could not, handle the tools they were commanded to work with.

The evil deprecated by the Ship-builders is more extensive, and of more general import, than the temporary desertion of their workmen. A momentary want might point out the means of a permanent supply; they fear such a diminution in the causes of employing their men, as will occasion the trade itself to be considered as one capable of affording permanent subsistence only to a few, will prevent it from being the proper mean for the engagement of a large capital, and by confining hope, prevent that useful enterprise, which, in every art, leads to the highest degrees of perfection.

And at what time is this to be attempted? just then when government, sensible of the advantage to be derived from the union of science with manual skill and corporeal industry, have determined to derive from study, and philosophical investigation, all that can be obtained toward the perfection of ship-building. On this head, a principal opponent of the Ship-builders furnishes a curious and valuable piece of information. "By the king's order in council, Sept. 20, 1809," he says, "a superior class of shipwrights' apprentices has been established at the dock-yard of Portsmouth. It consists of twenty-five young men of liberal education, who, before admittance, must be examined

by the professor of the royal naval college, and the instructor in the theory of naval architecture. Their mornings are passed in the study of mathematics and mechanics, and in the application of them to naval architecture; in drawing the different parts of a ship, and making complete draughts and plans. The remainder of the day is employed under the master shipwright in the mould-loft, and in all the various kinds of manual labour connected with Ship-building, as well as in the management and conversion of timber, so as to make them fully acquainted with the detail of the duties of a practical shipwright. The last year of their apprenticeship is to be served at sea, to afford them an opportunity of acquiring some practical knowledge in the steering, sailing, trimming, and ballasting: during which the order directs, they shall mess with the officers, and be treated, in all respects, as gentlemen. Nothing can be more judicious than such an establishment; and, we understand, that a number of young men of the highest promise have already been entered; among whom we may hope for future surveyors of the navy, who will excel the French in the science of naval architecture, *as much as our shipwrights, at present, surpass theirs in the practice of the art.*"

May all such wishes be realized to their fullest extent! British talent wants only proper direction, and proper employ, to defy the rivalry of the proudest opponent; and, considering that it proceeds from the pen of an enemy, the praise in the concluding part of the extract is of no inconsiderable value. But should the project, at present so zealously pursued, succeed to the desired ex-

tent, there is every reason to apprehend that future surveyors of the navy will have few British shipwrights to enlighten with their knowledge, or guide by their judgment.

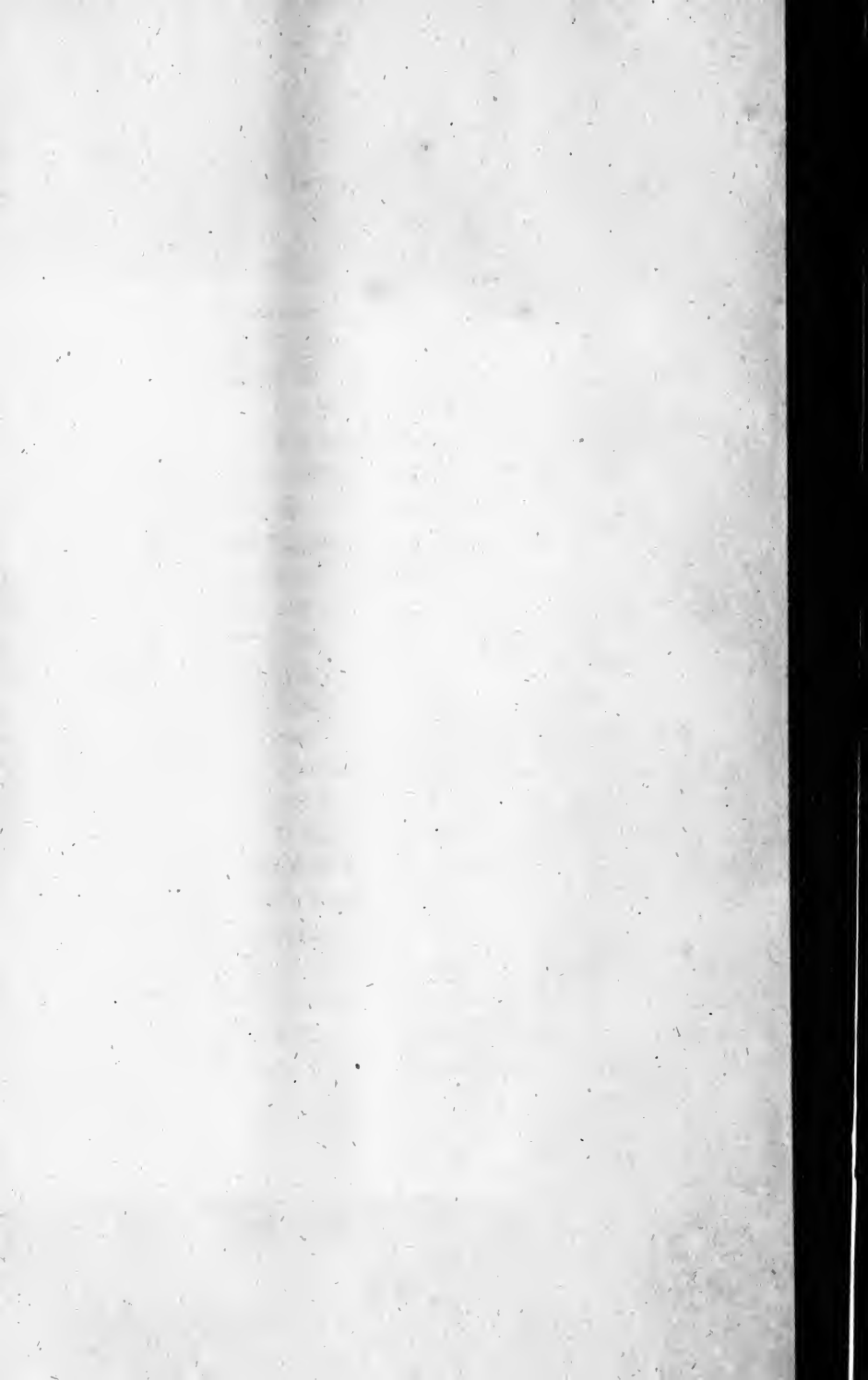
The fashionable air of raillery assumed by the opponents of the English Ship-builders, renders the use of some arguments rather difficult. An enumeration, derived from a very old and popular author, of the various trades which derive benefit from the equipment of ships, has furnished some topics of merriment. It was never meant to be said, that the measure now so eagerly pressed could ruin *all* these, but some will feel it most sensibly, and even vitally.

The removal of the building of ships for the East India Company to the continent of Asia, will not only affect those persons immediately concerned in their building and equipment, but every landholder throughout the empire. The constant and uniform demand for timber has been hitherto chiefly owing to East India ships being built in England, and the useful competition in the timber trade, which that measure has occasioned, has encouraged the proprietors of land, by the certainty of a ready sale, to promote the growth of timber generally throughout Great Britain. But should the transfer of building ships for the East India Company to India leave the agents of government the only purchasers in the timber market, then the grower of that article, being entirely at their mercy, will find the value of timber considerably depreciated. Oak timber being no longer in perpetual demand, will not bear a sufficient price to render it an immediate object of attention, and

thus, from the very methods adopted, to prevent an imaginary evil, a real scarcity will be produced.

The ruin of the Ship-builders seems to be contemplated with triumph, as an act of justice, rather than with compassion, as one of hardship. Their interests are too worthless to be weighed in the scale by those who decree their destruction; but however harsh this judgment may seem, the evil which will befall them will be wide-spreading and general. Their interests are connected with the interest, safety, and glory of the State, and the circumstances of the country demand that a strict and fostering attention should be paid to the well-being of a manufacture which cannot, without the most imminent danger, be suffered to languish in neglect, and fall into decay. Experience has shewn how important are the exertions of the private builders; the events which have already occurred, may be again produced by time and accident; and were Britain reduced to depend for her navy on the supplies to be derived from distant settlements, and from artificers whose prompt exertions she could not ensure, an age not far distant might see her attempting in vain to raise the Trident she could no longer wield, and fruitlessly endeavouring to reanimate those energies which have hitherto astonished and controuled the world.

THE END.



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